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**Wednesday, November 26, 2008**

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Tuesday, November 25, 2008

## Macomb briefs

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081125/METRO03/811250308/1409/METRO>

**Mom arraigned in abuse case** : Macomb County mother charged with child abuse for being intoxicated and falling into the Clinton River with her 22-month-old daughter was arraigned Monday in Macomb Circuit Court. Yvette Branch, who formerly lived in Virginia, is charged with a count of second-degree child abuse, a felony that carries a penalty of up to four years in prison. Branch is scheduled to appear in court for a pretrial conference Dec. 18. Authorities say Branch, 43, somehow wound up in the river in downtown Mount Clemens late last month along with her baby, who was in a stroller. Witnesses pulled them from the water around 5:20 p.m.



# Judge McBain blasts plea bargains in child-abuse cases

**Posted by Danielle Quisenberry | Jackson Citizen Patriot November 26, 2008 07:04AM**

Jackson County Circuit Judge John McBain is blasting the Prosecutor's Office for allowing accused child abusers to plead to lesser offenses.

"I've seen some horrific child abuse cases and every time it is the same thing," McBain said last week before he sentenced Walter Davis Jr., 38, to 16 to 24 months in prison for third-degree child abuse.

"What I see is a consistent pattern of plea-bargaining these cases."

McBain ripped the Prosecutor's Office, specifically Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates, for agreeing to reduce the charge against Davis, who is accused of causing injuries, including a skull fracture, to his former wife's then-8-month-old son in their Spring Arbor home.

McBain likened the plea deal to that of Kirk Coleman, who, amid public criticism of both McBain and the prosecutor, was convicted of attempted child abuse after police initially alleged he sexually abused and nearly beat to death his baby daughter.

In the Davis case, Bates said a greater child abuse charge would have been difficult to prove.

"The injuries are consistent with what the defendant explained and the defendant explained an accidental cause of the injuries," she said.

Davis initially was charged with second-degree child abuse, a felony punishable by up to four years in prison. That charge was dropped when he pleaded guilty Oct. 2 to two counts of third-degree child abuse, a high-court misdemeanor punishable by up to two years in prison.

The state sentencing guidelines — which consider prior convictions, violence of the offense and other factors to recommend a sentence — called for the same penalty for either second-degree child abuse or two counts of third-degree child abuse, Bates said.

"In this case, I don't see how any other course of action would have made a major difference," said Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mark Blumer.

McBain decided to deviate from the guidelines, which were zero to 17 months, in giving Davis up to 24 months in prison at the suggestion of Assistant Prosecutor Nick Mehalco Jr.

McBain said the plea agreement was made more egregious because the Prosecutor's Office did not consult with the baby's mother, Kristina Crawford, who spoke tearfully at the sentencing. McBain accused the office of violating the state Crime Victim's Rights Act, which requires prosecutors to inform victims of various steps in the legal process.

Bates said the Prosecutor's Office had no legal obligation to speak with Crawford about the plea because, at the time, she did not have custody of the child.

Bates also handled the Coleman case. First-degree child abuse and first-degree criminal sexual assault charges were

dropped against Coleman in May. There was some question about whether the baby was sexually abused and the girl's grandmother, who had custody of the child, wanted to see Coleman's parental rights terminated. Had he been acquitted by a jury, he might have regained custody.

"The problem with these types of cases, you only have two people in the room and the victim can't testify," said Mehalco, who was standing in for Bates last week.

Davis said he threw the boy — who is now 17 months old and doing OK — in the air in January but failed to catch him. He also told police the boy had earlier fallen off a counter. A doctor testified he had a skull fracture, internal head bleeding, bruises and a broken left arm. McBain said the case should have gone to trial.

The Prosecutor's Office has tried some child abuse cases recently.

In December, a jury acquitted Paul Brower, who was accused of suffocating to death his 3-year-old daughter, on charges of first-degree murder, felony murder and first-degree child abuse.

After he read the jury's verdict, McBain said he was not convinced Brower was guilty.

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# Muskegon woman, 85, found in 'horrific' conditions

Posted by Heather Lynn Peters | The Muskegon Chronicle November 25, 2008 17:42PM

A frail, 85-year-old woman, found in her dilapidated Muskegon home Monday night, was unfed for possibly three weeks, unbathed for nearly a year and covered in her own feces, Muskegon police said.

A 50-year-old man who lived at the same address was taken into custody and is expected to be charged with elder abuse today, said Tony Kleibecker, the city's director of public safety. The man is a family member and "presumably her caretaker," Kleibecker said.

Kleibecker said medical first responders arrived at 1692 Hoyt around 7 p.m. after a family member called 911 and requested an ambulance for an elderly woman having a difficult time breathing.

But when medical personnel attempted to walk through the front door of the rundown home, "they were literally overcome by hellacious fumes of excrement and garbage," Kleibecker said.

The elderly woman was found lying on a couch in the home where police say she had likely been left for about three weeks "covered in her own waste."

"The first responders last night became ill in the front yard because of the odor," Kleibecker said Tuesday. "How do you treat another human that way — especially an elderly woman? It's beyond belief."

Additional details about the case, including the 50-year-old man's name, were not available Tuesday because the man had not yet been charged, Kleibecker said.

The Muskegon County prosecutor's office and local social service officials were also involved in the case, he said.

The woman is currently being cared for at a local hospital, Kleibecker said. "The good thing is she is alive and in a much cleaner environment," he said.

Kleibecker said a family member who did not live at the Hoyt address believed the elderly woman had not "been bathed in a year."

He called the condition of the home "absolutely horrific."

"The ceiling of the main room was starting to collapse from water damage that supposedly started in the 1990s," Kleibecker said. "There are some real structural problems."

City officials have deemed the home uninhabitable, Kleibecker said.

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November 26, 2008

## Kids get a new start in Michigan Adoption Day

BY MEGHA SATYANARAYANA  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Six-year-old Kyler Fowler ran around his Livonia house Tuesday morning, screaming, "It's my forever day."

Later that morning, in the courtroom of Wayne County Circuit Judge Mary Beth Kelly, he held tight to Tanya Fowler and proudly boasted: "Today it's Fowler. It's official."

In a special, open court session, the judge allowed nearly all of the 23 former foster care children in her courtroom to bang the gavel and seal their adoptions. The event, part of Michigan Adoption Day, creates what the state, the children and their new parents hope will be a permanent, "forever home."



SUSAN TUSA/Detroit Free Press

**Frank King, 6 months, takes the gavel from Judge Mary Beth Kelly on Tuesday with help from his new aunt, Melinda Lamberg. Frank was one of five children adopted by Robert and Debra King of Taylor, the children's grandparents. Most of the children got to bang the gavel.**

"Adoption is the state of Michigan's promise to protect them when they entered the system," Kelly said to a packed courtroom, festooned with balloons, roses and gift bags with teddy bears poking out.

The rare glimpse into normally closed adoption proceedings was offered along with a plea to the state's residents to find homes for the 4,252 children who are ready to be adopted, and the 1,104 who are nearly ready.

Most of the kids in Kelly's courtroom Tuesday went home with relatives -- grandparents, aunts and uncles. While placement with relatives is common, reunification with birth parents is the state's primary goal and the outcome in the majority of state foster care cases.



**Kyler, 6, adjusts the tie of his soon-to-be dad, Christopher Fowler of Livonia, during Michigan Adoption Day at Wayne County Circuit Court. Christopher and Tanya Fowler learned about Kyler through a homeschool network.**

For the children older than 14, Kelly asked their consent to be adopted. Ki'Esha Moncrief, 17, a top student at University Preparatory Academy in Detroit, said "yes" when asked if she wanted to go home with her grandmother and five siblings.

But when the judge asked why she consented, the future University of Michigan student took a deep breath, and simply cried.

Recruiting nonrelative parents is a challenge, said Ismael Ahmed, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

"They fear adoption is arduous," he said. "There is some difficulty, to be honest, because we want a good match."

The Fowlers learned about Kyler through a homeschool network. Another family adopted him from Russia and decided they couldn't handle him any longer. Starting in January, the Fowlers scheduled visits with the boy. While leaving court Tuesday, his last wish was that his new parents open his promised savings account.

Tanya Fowler said she and her husband, Chris, chose the public venue of Michigan Adoption Day for his adoption to give Kyler a chance to see the process, meet the judge he'd only heard about, and "see her give them the paperwork that says, Kyler Allen Fowler."

Contact **MEGHA SATYANARAYANA** at 313-223-4544 or [megha@freepress.com](mailto:megha@freepress.com).

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

## Finding a new home: 225 kids taken in across state on Adoption Day

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** -- Even at 17, it wasn't too late for Ki'Esha Moncrief to find her "forever" home.

The pretty, soft-spoken teen and her five siblings were among 225 Michigan children adopted Tuesday in recognition of Michigan Adoption Day -- a day meant to encourage adoption by showcasing families that welcome foster children into their families.

In Wayne County Circuit Judge Mary Beth Kelly's courtroom, 23 children -- all dressed in their Sunday best -- were adopted by seven families in a festive event that included teddy bears for the kids and roses for their parents. The youngest, 6-month-old Frank King, cooed happily in a blue terrycloth sleeper. Similar celebrations took place across 30 Michigan counties including Oakland, where 24 children were adopted by 22 families; and Macomb, where eight became part of six adoptive homes.



Carmen Rogers, 10, center, was adopted Tuesday along with her siblings by her grandmother, Sheila Rogers Starghill of Detroit. (John T. Greilick / The Detroit News)

"I know who my parent is now," said Ki'Esha, who was adopted by her grandmother, Sheila Rogers Starghill, 61, who also adopted siblings Michelle Moncrief, 15, Markus Rogers, 14, Christine Rogers, 12, and 10-year-old twins Carmen Rogers and Shawn Rogers.

"She is mom and dad and grandma," Ki'Esha said. "I'm happy."



Starghill, of Detroit, said the occasion was joyous but tinged with sadness knowing her grown son was not able to care for his children. The grandmother has cared for the kids since child protection workers removed them from their home four years ago.

"It's a happy-sad day," Starghill said. "Obviously you want your kids to be with their own parents." Kelly praised Starghill and other relatives who have worked hard to keep families of grandchildren or nieces and nephews together.

Children over 14 must give their permission to be adopted. When Kelly asked Ki'Esha, her sister Michelle, and brother Markus for their consent, they said yes, and tears rolled down the girls' cheeks.

"I can tell you teenagers need a permanent home too," Kelly said. "It's hard for 16- and 17-year-olds not to be adopted."



At 6 months, Frank King, held by aunt Melinda Lambert, was the youngest adoptee in the courtroom of Judge Mary Beth Kelly, right. (John T. Greilick / The Detroit News)

The Michigan Adoption Day events were co-sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange and the Family Services division of the State Court Administrative Office.

Michigan has 4,125 foster children waiting for adoptive homes, said Ismael Ahmed, director of the state Department of Human Services, who witnessed the adoptions in Kelly's courtroom.

Ahmed said he was there to encourage more families to adopt children lingering in foster care, many of whom will age out of the system never having found a family to adopt them.

"I'd like to come here a year from now and have this proceeding be for 4,125 children," Ahmed said.

Christopher and Tanya Fowler of Livonia said their lives have been filled with love since they took in 6-year-old Kyler Beatty as a foster child about six months ago. They'd been married 10 years but had no children. Now they're Kyler's adoptive parents.

"Everybody focuses on what a blessing it is for the kids," Tanya Fowler said. "But it's been a huge blessing for us.

"I love being a mom, and it's added a whole new dimension to our lives."

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or [kbouffard@detnews.com](mailto:kbouffard@detnews.com).



Patricia Kiser lets her new adoptee Alexis Gonzales play with a teddy bear given to kids at the court.

Parents got roses. (John T. Greilick / The Detroit News

# PETOSKEY News-Review

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## Making it official: Three families grow by one on Adoption Day

**By Steve Zucker News-Review Staff Writer**  
**Wednesday, November 26, 2008 9:09 AM EST**

Most of the time when 7th Probate Court Judge Fred Mulhauser walks into his courtroom, he's greeted with people wearing somber expressions commensurate with the bad situations that usually bring them there.

But nearly everyone was grinning when he walked in Tuesday to make three adoptions final as part of his court's observance of Michigan's Sixth Annual Adoption Day.

State officials were expecting about 225 adoptions to be finalized as part of Tuesday's observance.

In a press release about the day, Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor explained what the observance is all about.

"Michigan Adoption Day gives the public a window into the adoption process," Taylor said. "This is a celebration of adoption, but it's also very much about educating the public as to the challenges and great rewards of being an adoptive or foster parent."

Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed said there are about 4,125 children in the foster care system who have the goal of adoption. He said in 2008, the agency oversaw the adoptions of 2,700 children from the foster care system.

"While that number is commendable, let's do the math – we need more adoptive families. We need many 'adoption days' – not just now but throughout the year."

Among the three families who officially grew by one Tuesday were Doug and Rachel Mantha of Petoskey who adopted 13-month old Amelie Hye-won (pronounced Ah-ma-lee) from Seoul, South Korea.

Doug Mantha said it was a four-year-long, difficult road to Tuesday's official adoption, but it's all been worth it.

Mantha said he and Rachel wanted more children after their son Jeremy, 10, was born, but were unable to have more children of their own.

That's when they started considering adoption. They started with a domestic adoption agency, but after two years without a match, they began working with overseas agencies.

After many months of prayer and trying not to get their hopes up too high, the long-awaited phone call finally came and in July the family



The families who had adoptions finalized as part of Adoption Day in 7th Probate Court Tuesday are: (from left) Adam and Angela Silveus with daughter Alyssa; Doug and Rachel Mantha with son Jeremy holding daughter Amelie; 7th Probate Court Judge Fred Mulhauser; and Amy and Matt Stoll with daughter Elizabeth. (Steve Zucker/News-Review)



7th Probate Court Judge Fred Mulhauser (left) performs a brief hand-holding ceremony for the Mantha family, (from left) Amelie, Rachel, Jeremy and Doug, after finalizing Amelie's adoption Tuesday. (Steve Zucker/News-Review)

traveled to Seoul to meet Amelie, who had been in foster care since birth.

And although she cried for about a third of the very long flights home, Mantha said Amelie seems to be a perfect match for their family.

"Things are going extremely well," Mantha said. "She's such a happy little girl. She gets along with everyone. She's very bright. She spoke four Korean words at 9 months old."

Mulhauser, who handles a few dozen adoptions each year between Charlevoix and Emmet counties, said occasions such as Tuesday's are a nice change of pace from the situations he usually handles.

"It's nice to come into court and everybody's smiling," the judge said. "But it's also important to bring attention to the idea that there are so many kids in the state who are without permanent homes. Any time we can raise public awareness that's important."

The other two families adopting children Tuesday were Amy and Matt Stoll of Petoskey, who adopted 6-month-old Elizabeth, and Adam and Angela Silveus, also of Petoskey, who adopted Alyssa, age 9.

**Steve Zucker**

439-9346 - [szucker@petoskeynews.com](mailto:szucker@petoskeynews.com)

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# WZZM 13 News - Print Editon

## Adoption Day creates new families in West Michigan

Posted By: [WZZM 13](#)

■ 2 hrs ago

OTTAWA COUNTY, Mich. (WZZM) Hundreds of children across the state have a new place to call home.

As part of Michigan's 6th annual adoption day, 13 families in Ottawa County adopted children. The event happened at the Fillmore Complex in West Olive.

We spoke with a couple from Zeeland, welcoming a six-month old girl into their lives. The did not want to share their name, but said they are very excited about the new addition to their family.

"I would say adoption for us was a lot of hope. And it was something we didn't find in other ways of becoming parents. So I would encourage people, if you're on the fence about it, go for it. God will give you what you need to get through it and it will be. How you can look at this face and not have joy?

All Michigan counties participate in Adoption Day making it the largest in the country.



Ottawa County

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## Genesee County families get a bit bigger

Tuesday, November 25, 2008 | 5:56 PM

### ***Michigan's National Adoption Day held Tuesday***



By Matt Franklin

See video at <http://abclocal.go.com/wjrt/story?section=news/local&id=6525115>

GENESEE COUNTY (WJRT) -- (11/25/08)--Several families in Genesee County got a little bit bigger Tuesday. Tuesday afternoon, five families finalized the adoptions of their children.

Tuesday's event was a part of Michigan's National Adoption Day.

It was truly an emotional afternoon at the Genesee County Circuit Courthouse. Five families got a little bit larger as they welcomed new members into their lives for good.

"This petition for adoption is approved. Congratulations," said Judge Duncan Beagle.

Beagle filled in for Judge Jennie Barkey, approving five adoptions. It's just another reason why these families are so thankful this holiday season.

Across the state there were 225 adoptions approved as part of Michigan's Adoption Day.

But the day was also designed to raise awareness regarding the need for loving families to take in one or more of the 4,000 kids who are currently in the foster system.

The kids being adopted were between 14 months old up to 8 years old. Some of the families were on their fourth or even sixth adoption.

There were grandparents, various relatives -- even a single mom who welcomed two new additions into her life.

"This is a real opportunity to build a family of wonderful children," said Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed.

"And there are so many great children that can be apart of an adoptive home."

Beagle approved the Ireland family of Grand Blanc. They adopted 14-month-old Patrick.



# Hoyle family 'blessed,' adds 3 more children (now 17 in all) on Adoption Day in Genesee County

by Ashley Smith | The Flint Journal  
Tuesday November 25, 2008, 10:00 PM



Stuart Bauer | The Flint Journal Sanford Hoyle (back, in red) and his wife, Sharon (back, center) of Mundy Township have plenty of help as they prepare greens for their Thanksgiving dinner on Monday night. With them are most of their children, a few grandchildren and a godchild, Ikeya Otler (in pink), 16, of Flint.

FLINT -- Dyemesheann, 5, huddled with her two sisters Tuesday on a courtroom bench, anxious, but smiling, and turned to her grandfather with one simple question.

"Am I a Hoyle yet?" she said.

"In about a half hour," said Sanford Hoyle, 51, of Mundy Township.

The children were dressed in their Sunday best as they waited along with four other families for their turn to become officially, legally, what they already were -- a family.

For Dyemesheann, Alma, 4; and Daisanae, 2; -- they've literally been waiting for this moment their entire lives.

Cameras flashed and congratulations were exchanged between families in the courtroom who, like the Hoyles, had waited eagerly for the day.

What took months of paperwork and meetings with social workers boiled down to less than 10 minutes in front of the judge and manilla envelope containing precious papers making Dyemesheann, Alma and Daisanae officially Hoyles.

The trio of girls join one heck of a family -- that also includes three adopted boys, Matthew,

16, Tyrone, 10 and Dejon, 7; eight biological children the couple raised together; and Sanford Hoyle's three biological children, who were raised by their mothers. In all, there are 17 children, although most of them are now adults.

"We're truly blessed this day," said Sanford Hoyle. "I've wanted nothing more and this was a slow drag, but it's done now and we thank God."

Adoption Day for the Hoyles was one of many happy moments for a family that also has seen its share of heartbreak. (The Hoyles lost three grandchildren in a house fire in 2004.)

"I'm very elated, very emotional," said Sharon Hoyle, 48. "My heart is racing. This day was way overdue and it's a happy moment."

Sharon Hoyle works for the Flint Board of Education's Bridges to the Future program and Sanford Hoyle is a minister at Prayer Garden Church of God in Christ in Flint, elementary school coach and volunteer -- so the two are constantly involved in working with kids.



**Stuart Bauer | The Flint Journal** Sanford Hoyle of Mundy Township helps granddaughter Cherry, 7, with homework Monday night.

**"A lot of the children we deal with are from ... homes with no fathers," Sanford Hoyle said. "We can give them the extra love and attention they need and be a role model for them." The couple also has 23 godchildren.**

Ikeya Otler, 16, isn't an official part of the family, but she knows she is always welcome at the Hoyle's home.

"Without them I wouldn't have God in my life," Otler said. "I've stayed out of trouble and I'm not trying to be fast or get pregnant."

As a child of the foster care system, Sanford Hoyle in particular has been able to reach out to struggling kids, including his own.

"I came from a situation where my mother wasn't there, I don't even know my father's name and I used to stand on the street corner with my mom. I used to hold her arm while she shot up," Sanford Hoyle said.

Living on the streets, Sanford Hoyle was involved in drugs and gangs before one day having a revelation.

"I came to the conclusion I was threw with drugs, gangs and living in abandoned homes," Hoyle said. "The day I was saved I just gave it all up. I got my act together and was able to be the father and man I needed to be."

The Hoyles became foster care parents after wanting -- but being unable -- to help two children they knew because they weren't licensed through the state.



The Hoyles' first adoption was of Matthew, one of their foster children.

"They changed my life," Matthew said. "It feels good to have a roof over my head. Being a part of their life makes my life better."

Dyemesheann, Alma and Daisanae have been with the Hoyles most of their lives.

"Thank the good Lord for grandparents," said Beagle.

The Hoyles say despite the numbers in their family there are little financial worries and if other children comes along and needs a home they'll welcome them with open arms.

"This is what me and my wife do, we love children," Sanford Hoyle said. "We are some of the most blessed people you will meet and God said it was all meant to be."



Stuart Bauer | The Flint Journal | Keya Otler (left), 16, of Flint, godchild of Sanford (far, center) and Sharon Hoyle of Mundy Township, helps Dyemesheann (second from right), 5, and Dejon (right), 7, with math problems as Stephon (center), 12, looks on Monday night.

#### **Flint Journal extras**

- Michigan Department of Human Services or [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) has information about the state's foster care system and adoptions.
- Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange or [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org), gives information and is a referral service for parents interested in adopting children with special needs.

Their adoptions by their grandparents Sanford and Sharon Hoyle were finalized by Genesee County Judge Duncan M. Beagle on Tuesday as part of a statewide celebration of Michigan Adoption Day, which included adoptions being finalized for about 200 families.

### [Mich. Celebrates 6th Annual Adoption Day](#)

November 25 was **Michigan's** sixth annual **Adoption Day**. Families across the state adopted more than 200 children who now have a permanent place to call home. Local 4's Roger Weber reports on one family's story.

Watch video from Detroit at

<http://www.clickondetroit.com/video/18147022/index.html?rss=det&psp=localvideo>



## Children Find Homes on Adoption Day

November 25, 2008 - 6:46PM

Hundreds of families grew Tuesday, as Michigan Adoption Day made more than 200 adoptions final.

Marking the 6th annual Michigan Adoption Day, this Thanksgiving many Mid-Michigan families will have another reason to celebrate. On Tuesday in Ingham County, three families grew as new members were officially added.

Clutching their new mother tightly, Kiasia, Issac and Aneyesha Richardson were officially adopted by their grandmother, Willie Richardson. She says she is extremely grateful she was able to adopt the children but knows there are many more kids who still need help.

"There are a lot of kids out there that need adoption, a lot of kids out there sitting in the system and their parents won't be able to get them back," Richardson says.

Judge Janelle Lawless who presided over Tuesday's hearings says adoptions are the most rewarding part of her job because too often when the courts deal with children it is under unhappy circumstances.

"You saw (Tuesday) we already have families, but being part of making that process legal is wonderful and everybody's happy and in a good mood versus some of the other things that we see regarding children," Lawless says.

Richardson became familiar with that other side of the system when she saw her son's three children taken away from him and resolved to get them back.

"He couldn't provide the care for them so he lost his right and they became wards of the state and I wanted them to stay with family and love and didn't wanna lose em so I adopted them," she says.

Richardson says she couldn't be happier that Kiasia, Issac and Aneyesha are finally hers. She says it isn't going to be easy raising the three of them but she knows what it takes to do it.

"A lot of love, a lot of patience, and willpower, a lot of willpower," Richardson says.

Tuesday's Adoption Day finalized about 225 adoptions across Michigan but Judge Lawless says that in Ingham County alone there are still about 700 children in foster care who still need a home.



# Adoption Day in Michigan

November 25, 2008 - 5:32PM

MICHIGAN (NEWSCHANNEL 3) - Tuesday, the focus was on adoption in the State of Michigan as state workers looked to find children statewide a good home.

There are approximately 6,100 children in foster care whose parents' rights have been terminated, right now over 4,100 are eligible for adoption. Many families celebrated this annual event by growing their families through the legal adoption process.

One of Tuesday's big events was held in Ottawa County, and Newschannel 3 was there.

11 different families adopted a total of 13 kids in Ottawa County Tuesday.

It was a big day for eight-month-old Lucy, a day she's too young to be able to remember, but it was the day her adoption became official.

"It was quite an exciting, exhilarating feeling that we were going to have the chance to be parents," said Tim Russ and Nora Salas, who became Lucy's parents Tuesday, "it was like a dream.

Tim and Nora have been married for six years, they'd been trying to have children from the beginning and about a year ago, decided to adopt. They said that "Lucy is a joy to our family."

Every adoption story is a little different, for 12-year-old T.J., the road to adoption has been a long one. T.J.'s been through the process before, his last adoption fell through because the parents changed their minds. But for the Neitrings, it was never a question.

"Now he knows he's a part of our family," said April Neitring, T.J.'s mom, "it's an awesome feeling."

Al and April Neitring have three adult children, and have been foster parents for about 15 years. After living with T.J. for two years, the Neitrings decided to make him a permanent member of the family.

"When you know, you just know in your heart," April said, "it's good for T.J. and I know he's gonna be a good fit."



November 26, 2008

## Adoption Day places 21 kids

**Trace Christenson**  
*The Enquirer*

MARSHALL — The Calhoun County courtroom was chaotic Tuesday.

The noise level was high and few people were sitting still.

"This is usually not the most quiet of all audiences," observed Michigan Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Markman.

In the audience were 11 families about to adopt 21 children.

Adoption is usually a private event, but Tuesday was the annual Michigan Adoption Day, open to the public as a way to promote adoption and foster care.

Thirty Michigan counties held adoption day and about 225 adoptions were made final.

Many of the families, like Kathy Brutsche of Battle Creek, were adopting again. Four years ago she adopted Ariana, now 6, and Tuesday added Krystina, 2, to the family.

"We hope it communicates options to people," Markman said before helping Calhoun County Probate Court Judge Gary Reed with the ceremony. "And it is an inspiring and emotional experience."

It was emotional for Jenise Furman, 39, of Battle Creek, who was wiping away tears after the adoption was final for her and her husband, Tracy, 44, of three children, Jasper, 7, Christian, 5, and McKenzie, 4.

She remembers as foster care parents accepting the kids into their home in 2006, four days before Christmas.

The Furmans accepted four children whose mother was addicted to drugs. (The oldest boy, now 9, is living with his father.)

Already the parents of three biological children, Jenise Furman, an employee of the Battle Creek City Assessing Department, said she and her husband, disabled and a stay-at-home dad, had to scramble for Christmas presents for the new children.

The children had some difficulty for a few days accepting their new home. Seven days after they moved in, Jenise was leaving the bedroom after tucking in the children and heard a little voice say, "I want a hug."

It was McKenzie.

"We became Mom and Dad," Jenise said.

The couple had become foster parents after caring for the child of a cousin. They watched six foster kids come and then leave the house but enjoyed having the children.

"My husband is one of seven kids and I see no difference in making a plate for three kids as making a plate for eight kids," she said.

"These kids need someone to love," Tracy Furman said. "We do it because we care."

They recommend becoming foster parents, though Tracy Furman said it's important "to have an open heart and an open mind."

"You have to have patience," Jenise Furman said, "and an open mind and you can't sweat the little stuff. Just have love to give that child."

*Trace Christenson can be reached at 966-0685 or [tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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## A home for the holidays: 13 children adopted Tuesday in Ottawa County

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Wed, Nov 26, 2008

BY BRIAN KEILEN

[bkeilen@grandhaventribune.com](mailto:bkeilen@grandhaventribune.com)

WEST OLIVE — Roger and Andrea Dattadeen went from having no children to two in less than a year. And no, it wasn't a miracle of fertility.



Instead, the Holland couple opted to adopt both of their children, including son Austen on Tuesday. The adoption was part of the sixth annual Michigan Adoption Day taking place across the state. In all, 30 Michigan courts came together to celebrate adoptive families and efforts to place children into adoptive homes.

Locally, 13 Ottawa County children were adopted by families in 11 confirmation hearings Tuesday — including the one finalizing Austin's adoption by the Dattadeens. Austen, 5, was adopted alongside his brothers — Scott, 4; and Michael, 3 — who were adopted by Phillip and Nicole Hoek of Zeeland. The Dattadeens originally intended to do foster care and didn't intend to adopt a child, Andrea said, but that changed quickly.

"It feels like this is the next step," she said.

Roger said the couple was doing it for Austen. Their new son needed a sense of closure and permanence, he said.

Phillip Hoek's sister was adopted, so he was open to the idea from the start, he said — although the task of adopting two young boys has been daunting.

"It was very challenging at first," Nicole Hoek said. "But they've adjusted."

Jamie Maatman, the Dattadeens' and Hoeks' adoption worker, said it takes special people to adopt children. Parents need patience, a sense of humor and a strong marriage, and need to remember that the children come with a lot of baggage, she said.

"They're coming from broken homes," said Maatman, who works out of the Holland office of Bethany Christian Services. "You really have to be open to new ideas."

Austen, Scott and Michael first came in to Bethany Christian Services in March 2006. Their biological mother's custody rights were terminated in 2007. Austen was in one foster home while Scott and Michael were in another until they came to their adoptive parents.

Austen has been in the Dattadeens' care for almost a year. He now has a baby sister, Grace, who was also adopted by the couple.

"I thought they would be a great fit, longterm," Maatman said.

Scott and Michael have been with the Hoeks since February and have made tremendous progress with the family, Maatman said. A sense of permanency is important for every child, she added.

Bethany Christian Services oversees about 15 to 20 adoptions a year, and Maatman said she looks forward to days like Tuesday when she gets to see kids get placed in a permanent home.

"These are the best days," she said. "It's very rewarding coming in and knowing that this is it for these kids, that this is their last time in court."



November 26, 2008

## Family forever: Grandma, 3 children celebrate becoming 'real family'

*Christine Rook  
clrook@lsj.com*

Tiny Isaac Richardson stood behind the judge's bench Tuesday, barely tall enough to see over the top, his voice small and lost in the shuffle of people and paper.

Janelle Lawless, the presiding judge in Ingham County Circuit Court's Family Division, handed the 3-year-old her gavel. "The next time I say OK and you hit that, you know what it means?" she asked. "It means you're going to be able to stay with your grandma forever."

Moments later, Isaac brought the gavel down onto the sound block with a smack.

"This will be our first Thanksgiving together - back together as a real family," said Willie Richardson, his 46-year-old grandmother and now his legal parent Isaac, his two sisters Kyashya, 6, and Anyasaih, 2, were among at least six children adopted Tuesday in Lawless' court and among about 2,700 children statewide to have been adopted so far this year, according to the latest data from the state Department of Human Services.



Jeremy Herliczek/Lansing State Journal

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It's official: Anyasaih Richardson, 2, bangs the gavel marking her adoption Tuesday in Ingham County Judge Janelle Lawless' courtroom. Willie Mae Richardson (left) adopted her three grandchildren, including Isaac Richardson (left), 3, and Kyashya Richardson, 6.

For more photos, go to <http://www.lsj.com>



**Happy day: Kyashya Richardson, 6, was officially adopted Tuesday by her grandmother Willie Mae Richardson.**

Tuesday's adoptions were part of Michigan Adoption Day - a day within National Adoption Month that has been established to raise awareness about the importance of adoption in a state where 93 percent of all children are adopted by a relative or foster parent.

There are about 6,100 children in Michigan foster care whose parents no longer have a legal claim to them, according to state data. For almost 68 percent of them, state officials see adoption as the goal.

Nationally, there are upward of 100,000 foster children on any given day who hope to be adopted, according to a 2005 report by the non-partisan Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.

"Adoption day raises awareness in establishing permanence for children," said Janet Kaley, an Ingham County-based government adoption official with expertise in foster care.

There are barriers, though, to the adoption of foster children. A 2005 study conducted in part by the Urban Institute and the not-for-profit Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute looked at hurdles. More than 20 percent of interested families cited the children's problems as a reason to back off adoption. Another 18 percent noted the length of the adoption process, and 15 percent cited concerns about birth families.

Money and issues of time were lesser concerns.

As of the middle of this month in Ingham County alone, there were more than 700 children in foster care; officials plan to terminate parental rights to 46 of them. In at least a few of those cases, the courts will seek to place the children with extended family, rather than cutting off the children from all of their unique family culture.

"If it weren't for you," Lawless told Richardson, "I don't know where these children would be today."

Annie and Aaron Jones of Lansing adopted their three grandchildren as well on Tuesday.

"I appreciate what Annie is doing," said Deborah Chedester, Aaron's sister from Hubbardston.

She recalled how she and her siblings lost their mother and were taken in by their grandmother.

"I'm glad it's over," Annie Jones said, after the court proceeding. She planned to watch a movie later that day with the three kids, "The Family that Preys." It's a story about two families learning to work together.

The Jones and Richardson families were now complete.

Richardson left the courtroom the same way she entered - smiling. "I love them," she told the judge. "They're my kids because they are my son's kids - and if they're his, they're mine."

## Additional Facts

### Age breakdown

Following are adoptions by age group for one year, ending Sept. 30, 2007, in Michigan. Figures include both private and state Department of Human Services adoptions.

- 0 to 3 years old: 941

- 4 to 8 years old: 842

- 9 and up: 819

Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

## On Adoption Day, a feast of smiles

Wednesday, November 26, 2008 6:30 AM EST

By Jameson Cook, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Carol Berthiaume, 55, of Warren, swears it's her last, and 11th, adoption, even though she says she feels as energized as ever.

"Of course I get tired, I'm human, but I see other people my age that can't do what I do; I'm always on the go," she said with a laugh as she held her nearly 2-year-old daughter, Natalie.

Berthiaume's adoption of Natalie was formally approved Tuesday along with the adoption of seven other children into five other families, in Macomb County Circuit Court. It was part of the annual Adoption Day in which circuit courts statewide open their doors for the normally private affairs in an effort to encourage more people to adopt.



**Macomb Daily staff photo by David N. Posavetz Carol Berthiaume, right, holds her newly adopted daughter, Natalie. On the left is another daughter, Michelle.**

Berthiaume, who has been a foster parent to more than 200 children over 35 years, adopted her first two children in 1981 and continued adopting in 1992, 1994, 1999 and 2002. Now she has about 10 children living in a five-level home.

"It's fun to go to her house and have all the kids running around and enjoying life," said Ellen Watts, an adoption worker for the state Department of Human Services. "She is very organized. The children all have a role in the home and, as you can see, they all give the baby (Natalie) attention."

Berthiaume is a strong advocate for her children, some of whom have special needs, and has "a ton of support" from friends, neighbors and her church, Watts said.

"She is very calm, she takes everything in stride," said the family's "adopted" grandmother, Elsie Mannerow of Fraser. "She stays calm and loving, but she still is firm. If she says it, she means it."

Berthiaume's 11 adopted children are the most that county Adoption Supervisor Michael Hester has seen in his five years in the position. Many of the children, as well as friends, attended the proceeding.

Tuesday's procedures, overseen by Judge Antonio Viviano, were common of noncontested adoptions — beaming parents accompanied by their grinning children dressed in their Sunday best.

The adopted children had been living with their new parents for some time, and the trial period had gone well. An adoption worker for each family testified about their positive recommendation.

Patricia Miri of Shelby Township adopted 7-year-old Cameron, who said afterward he was "excited and happy" to have a mom.

Miri, 46, who has two biological children, 17 and 24, adopted her younger sister's child after her sister's parental rights were terminated.

Miri, a self-employed hair dresser, said it was the natural thing to do after Cameron spent three unhappy weeks in foster care.

"It was something the Lord put in my heart, to have him," Miri said outside the courtroom. "That's what life is all about, doing something selfless."

Like he did with all of the new parents, Viviano told them they not only must provide their child's physical needs, they are responsible for their "intellectual, spiritual and moral needs."

"Are you prepared to do that?" Viviano asked Miri in court.

"It's already started," she replied.

Later, she said, "We've got some issues to work out, but things are going well."

State Court of Appeals Judge Christopher Murray, who represented the state Supreme Court, said the event provided a refreshing glimpse at court proceedings.

"To actually come here to see people happy, it really lifts your spirits," he said.

Hester said Macomb County this year has already seen the most adoptions ever, 276, a total that he hopes will hit 300 by Jan. 1. In 2007, 251 children were adopted.

Although there are nine types of adoptions, nearly all are either by a foster parent (49 percent), or by a relative (43 percent). Hester said Macomb County's experience is similar to statewide results. He said the third most common adoption type in Macomb is by a stepparent.

Also gaining final adoption approval Tuesday were Terry and Karen Derian of St. Clair Shores, who adopted Austin, 11, Sterling, 9, and Sierra, 7; Clayton Smith of Roseville, who adopted Nathan, 6; Nicole Deters of St. Clair Shores, with Ryan 15; and Aleric and Crystal Ward of Warren, welcoming Marcus, 1.

URL: <http://www.macombdaily.com/articles/2008/11/26/news/srv0000004139986.prt>

## Family for the holiday

Wednesday, November 26, 2008 6:02 AM EST

By ANN ZANIEWSKI  
Of The Oakland Press

Five-year-old Angelina Schultz beamed as she gave her father a big bear hug. "Daddy!" she exclaimed. The Schultz family of Hazel Park and other families finalized adoptions Tuesday just in time for Thanksgiving during Michigan's sixth annual Adoption Day.

The Schultzes and a family from Lake Orion adopted children at a ceremony in the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Auditorium. Twentytwo other adoptions were finalized in circuit judges' courtrooms.

"We start the holiday season by creating families," said Oakland Circuit Judge James Alexander, who presides over the court's Family Division. "It's fun to see everybody happy in the courthouse for a change."

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Marilyn Kelly said Adoption Day celebrates adoption and encourages people to remember the 4,125 Michigan children waiting for adoptive families.



David and Michele and their new 6-month-old adopted daughter Bianca Lucia are shown during Tuesday morning's Adoption Day ceremony at the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Auditorium.

She said Michigan, where 225 adoptions were finalized statewide Tuesday, has the largest Adoption Day of any state.

Hans Schultz, 35, met Angelina's mother, 25-year-old Jennifer, when Angelina was just over a year old. He quickly fell in love — with both.

Hans and Jennifer married in February. They decided to make Hans Angelina's legal father, a decision that was just fine with her.

"She's real excited about getting the same last name as mom and dad," Hans Schultz said.

After the adoption was finalized, Angelina, wearing a barrette in her hair and a blue and purple dress, leaned into her father as people snapped pictures. She said she was most excited about eating a cupcake at a reception held afterward.

"We're so happy," Jennifer Schultz said.

Lake Orion couple Michele, 38, and David, 40, took turns holding 6-monthold Bianca at Tuesday's ceremony. They asked that their last names not be used because their adoption was closed, meaning that they and the birth mother know limited information about each other.

Michele, a teacher, and David, a physician, worked with an adoption agency. They had been waiting for a child for more than a year.

Then, they suddenly got a phone call on the day Bianca was born. Her birth mother decided at the time of delivery to allow the couple to adopt her baby.

"Every other priority in our lives took second hand at the time of that phone call," David said. "Bianca became priority one."

David said it was almost surreal to have the adoption finalized just two days before Thanksgiving.

"It really gives new meaning to Thanksgiving," David said.

William Bartlam, the manager of the court's Juvenile Support Services, was also honored at Tuesday's ceremony with the Arthur Eugene Moore Champion of Children Award.

URL: [http://www.theoaklandpress.com/articles/2008/11/26/news/local\\_news/doc492d21cd32c2f565742383.prt](http://www.theoaklandpress.com/articles/2008/11/26/news/local_news/doc492d21cd32c2f565742383.prt)



# Kids get a home -- forever; Adoption Day makes siblings' new families official

by Stephanie Esters | Kalamazoo Gazette  
Wednesday November 26, 2008, 10:20 AM



Jill McLane Baker | Kalamazoo Gazette "I've waited so long for this," said Debra Tarkkanen, right, of Paw Paw, as she hugs her son, James Tarkkanen, 4, as her daughter, Jaylene Tarkkanen, 8, looks on at left. James and Jaylene and their sister, Elyssay, 6, Tarkannen's biological grandchildren, were adopted Tuesday afternoon as part of Michigan Adoption Day at the Crosstown Center in Kalamazoo.

**KALAMAZOO** -- Kalamazoo County Circuit Judge Stephen Gorsalitz suggested that Barbara Barrett write a book on time-management since she so adeptly runs a household with 10 children under the age of 16, eight of whom have special needs.

Barrett and her brood -- her four birth children, four other children she adopted years ago and the four she and her husband adopted Tuesday -- sat before Gorsalitz as he presided over the 9th Judicial Circuit Court's Adoption Day.

## How you can help

For information on becoming a foster-care parent or an adoptive parent, you can contact one of the following agencies:

- [Bethany Christian Services](#), Kalamazoo, 372-8800.
- [Family & Children Services](#), Kalamazoo, 344-0202.
- [Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services](#), 337-5043.
- [Lutheran Social Services of Michigan](#), 345-5776.

For more information on Children's Rights, go to [www.childrensrights.org](http://www.childrensrights.org).

"It's kind of like a well-oiled machine," Gorsalitz said Tuesday after listening to Barbara Barrett describe her family as one designing an artistic masterpiece. "We need more



families that have your (enthusiasm) and love and that are able to get that trust going with these kids."

Barrett and her husband, Jerry, sat at a courtroom table with Zoe, 3; Emily, 2; Samantha, 8; and 5-year-old Sebastian, nicknamed "Bash," the newest young people to join their family. Celebrating the day were their other eight children, who sat in the jury box, and other relatives sprinkled throughout the courtroom.

Jerry Barrett, who has nine siblings of his own, said he was less-than-enthusiastic about adopting. But, he said, he has grown to understand that everyone wants to "belong" somewhere, someplace.

"That's hard to do in our world, our society," he said. "That's a sad state of affair, and I'm so glad that the kids have shown that they feel like they belong to Barb and me." After the ceremony, the newest little Barretts shared what the day meant to them. Bash and Sam said they were excited by the day.

"I'm adopted," Sam said. That means "that we get to live here" at the Barretts' Mattawan home, permanently, he said.



**Anna Wilinski, also known as Clash the clown, paints 5-year-old Sebastian Barrett's face like Spider-man on Tuesday after he was adopted on Michigan Adoption Day.**

Even though Tuesday was a happy occasion, Brad Keller, head of the Kalamazoo Branch of Bethany Christian Services, noted that more foster and adoptive homes are needed. More than 4,000 children in Michigan are waiting to be adopted, he said. Many of the children are either part of sibling sets that agencies desire to place together, members of ethnic minority groups, or are children with special needs.

Also officially united on Michigan Adoption Day were siblings Desiree, 13; Shalonda, 12; Ansel, 11; and Faith, 5. They were adopted by the family headed by Denise Yancey, a single woman living in Kalamazoo. Yancey is already the mother to another adopted son, Curtis Ray, 16.

"It's been a long time," said Denise Yancey, who'd had the four siblings in her home twice in the past two years. "I'm so happy. I'm blessed by God to have these children placed in my care."

Desiree said she and her siblings spent a lot of time in foster care and that Tuesday's adoption signaled a new era for her.



**Denise Yancey, left, hugs her son, Ansel Yancey, 11, as Yancey's son Curtis Ray, 16, looks on. Ansel was one of four siblings Yancey adopted Tuesday on Michigan Adoption Day. Yancey previously adopted Curtis Ray.**

"This day means a lot in that I have a new home that I'm safe in, that I feel loved and that I'm just safe and secure," the eighth-grader said. "I'm happy where I am and that I wouldn't choose to be anywhere else."

Timeeko Churchwell, a friend of the family, attended the ceremony to offer his support. A single father from Kalamazoo, he adopted a 2-year-old boy seven years ago. He also is also the biological father of a 5-year-old daughter and a 9-year-old son.

"It's always a pleasure to see parents like her step up and take on other people's kids," Churchwell said.

# Grand Haven couple adopt seventh, eighth child

by Terry Judd | The Muskegon Chronicle

Tuesday November 25, 2008, 10:07 PM



Chronicle/Terry

**Judd**Chief Probate Judge Mark A. Feyen explains the adoption process to Benna Boyer, 9, while her brother, Derek 13, looks on. The two were officially adopted Tuesday by Terry and Barb Boyer of Nunica.

Don't ask Terry and Barb Boyer whether they are finished adopting children; in their case, eight is not necessarily enough.

Twelve years after their first adoption, the Nunica couple was back in Ottawa County Family Court Tuesday adopting their seventh and eighth child. And they may not be done.

"I remember people asked us after our sixth and we kept telling them we didn't know the answer," Barb Boyer said. "This is our life. We can sit back and watch how the kids have changed and how they have grown in their lives."

The Boyers were among 11 families in Ottawa County adopting 13 children Tuesday during special ceremonies designed to honor adoptions statewide and nationally. Each year, the days before Thanksgiving are traditionally set aside as official adoption days. The national event typically is held the Saturday before Thanksgiving but was rescheduled to Nov. 25 to avoid conflicting with the 45th anniversary of the death of President John F. Kennedy.

Michigan Adoption Day was held Tuesday with similar ceremonies in family courts across the state, including Muskegon County, though adoption numbers there weren't available at press time. In Ottawa County, six adoption agencies joined circuit court personnel in honoring families with adopted children, which included comments from court and county officials, and State Rep. Arlan Meekhof, R-West Olive, who told the children they can go on to bigger things, like being a state representative.

"I was adopted, so beware," he joked.



**Chronicle/Terry Judd** John and Tracy Weatherwax of Grand Haven adopted three brothers three years ago, including Luc, 3. The Weatherwaxes attended Michigan Adoption Day ceremonies in Grand Haven.

John and Tracy Weatherwax of Grand Haven, who adopted three boys in 2005, told adopting parents how their lives have changed over the past three years. Their sons Luc, 3, Moses, 6, and Dominic, came from the same family. A fourth brother was adopted by another family.

"I can tell you, the last three years have been wonderful," said John Weatherwax, an officer with the Holland Police Department. "We have our ups and downs just like any parent, but the rewards are there."

Barb Boyer, a bus driver for Fruitport Community Schools, long has known of the rewards of being an adoptive parent. Her parents were foster parents and she figures she has "168 brothers and sisters" who stayed in her childhood home at some point.

Although Terry Boyer said he initially was ambivalent about having children, he soon found out "I had no choice."

The two adopted 7-year-old Christopher, now 21, in 1996. And when Christopher started asking for a brother and someone to play with, 8-year-old Jonathan, now 18, was welcomed into the family a year later.

"The guys were taking over the house so he had to add a little girl," Barb Boyer said. Alexis, now 15, was adopted on her fifth birthday in 1998.

But more was to come. Later that same year, the Boyers received a call about a girl with four siblings. Erica, 4, now 15, Brandon, 6, now 16, and Brandi, 8, now 18, were adopted. On Tuesday, the six children were joined by Brenna, 9, and Derek, 14, two foster children that came to live with the Boyers in June.



Chronicle/Terry

**Judd Terry and Barb Boyer stand behind their eight adopted children at Ottawa County Probate Court, from left, Brandon, 16; Brandi, 18; Christopher, 21; Brenna, 9; Jonathan, 18; Erica, 15; Alexis, 15; and Derek, 14.**

The Boyers said all of their children came from abusive families in Muskegon, Ottawa and Allegan counties and have adjusted to a stable family life in a cramped four-bedroom home with two showers.

"I could sit here and tell you some of the saddest stories," Barb Boyer said. "I don't even like to remember them. But then you turn around and look at them now; you remember what all of these kids have gone through."

Circuit Judge Mark Feyen noted Barb and Terry Boyer have become familiar fixtures in his courtroom and he reminded Derek and Brenna how important Tuesday will become in their lives. He told each that the days of living from family to family were over.

"These are the last parents you ever will have," he said. "Even after you become an adult, they still will be your parents and this always will be your family."



# PETOSKEY News-Review

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## Employment service center feels need prior to unemployment benefits extension

By Noah Fowle News-Review Staff Writer  
Wednesday, November 26, 2008 8:40 AM EST

No one understood the need for President George Bush's extension of unemployment benefits more than local staff with Michigan Works!

"It's a tough time and we're trying to do anything we can for people at every level," said Jane Sage, the manager of the local employment service center in Traverse City. "There is a whole lot we can do for people. You just need to come in and ask."

According to Angie Ross, a business liaison with the Petoskey chapter, daily traffic in and out of the Summit Park Drive office has doubled.

"We were seeing anywhere from 30 to 75 people a day in the early fall, and this month we are close to 200 visitors a day," Ross.

As an employment service, Michigan Works! has a wide array of programs to address people's needs at every level and each step of the unemployment process. Michigan Works! also makes referrals to the Department of Human Services, local food banks or Goodwill if some level of welfare is needed.

"We can help update resumes, provide job leads, or sometimes people just need someone to talk to," said Sage. "We can work with the emotional issues too. We have anger management classes and stress workshops."

Details are still being sorted out about exactly who will be eligible through the recent presidential mandate, unemployment insurance is extended to 12 weeks instead of seven for areas with 6 percent or more — as of October Michigan qualifies with a 9.3 percent unemployment rate.

Earlier this year, Congress extended the standard unemployment benefits by 13 weeks for all states on top of the standard 26 weeks. According to Rep. Bart Stupak, with the latest extension, unemployed Michigan residents would be eligible for up to 59 weeks of benefits through Aug. 27, 2009.

"More Americans are looking for jobs than at any time since 1992," he said. "With costs increasing for necessities such as food and health care, these individuals need our help — particularly through this holiday season — while they look for work or retrain for a new career path."

**Noah Fowle** 439-9374 - [nfowle@petoskeynews.com](mailto:nfowle@petoskeynews.com)

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Article published at [MonroeNews.com](http://MonroeNews.com) on Nov 25, 2008

## Area food closets feeling pinch as need climbs

There were more folks than usual standing in line at the St. Joseph Food Closet in Monroe last week.

Unfortunately, not everyone got a bag of food, said Mary Cooper, coordinator of the weekly food distribution in the basement of the parish center.

"I had to turn away 50 people. I had nothing left," Mrs. Cooper said Monday. "I felt bad, but there was nothing we could do. We packed for 150 people and 190 showed up. The last 25 we had to scrounge around for something to give them."

Heavier turnouts are becoming quite commonplace at most of the food pantries in the Monroe County region as residents struggle to feed and clothe themselves and their families after losing their jobs due to the state's depressed economy.

"I believe it's going to get worse," Mrs. Cooper said. "Some will tell me they don't have anything to eat. Then I feel bad for them."

One woman with five children stopped last week and was crying because she was about to be evicted from a motel because she hadn't found a job yet. Mrs. Cooper told the woman the food closet would pay for another week of lodging. It was just the break she needed. Two days later, the mother called back and said she got a job working at Taco Bell.

"That made me happy," Mrs. Cooper said. "We both had tears in our eyes."

The St. Joseph Closet at E. Third St. and Kentucky Ave. is open from 11 a.m. to noon each Wednesday. It won't be open this week because of Thanksgiving and because recipients received turkeys and a few extra provisions last week, she said.

As soon as one distribution is done, the dozen volunteers must get ready to restock the shelves for the next. The closet relies heavily on Gleaners Food Bank in Detroit for donations of cake mixes, flour and syrup, but also on local schools like St. Mary Catholic Central High School, Trinity Lutheran School and St. John Catholic School that hold their own food collections in the classrooms. More aid from the schools and civic groups are needed to replenish supplies this winter, Mrs. Cooper said. The closet also uses memorial contributions. Last week, 165 gift certificates to buy food were given out to families, each for \$10.

The number of recipients has climbed dramatically since the summer, when about 85 people were helped on a weekly basis.

"A lot of them have five children," she said. "The rest have two to four members or are singles. We have (senior citizens), too."

Other Monroe-area food pantries like one at St. Anne Catholic Church is open twice a month.

The Bedford Township Goodfellows handed out boxes of food, turkeys and hams to about 220 families last week at the Lambertville United Methodist Church. The Goodfellows will help many of the same less fortunate at Christmas, said Chris Knaggs, chairman for the Goodfellows.

"I've seen some new faces of different people who need it," Mr. Knaggs said Monday.

He also oversees distribution of government surplus food such as canned fruits and vegetables and noodles every three months. About 40 families received food through this program Saturday at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, Temperance. Normally, about 72 families are helped.

More than 25 families received food boxes last week for Thanksgiving at the food closet run by St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Temperance. Some families had up to six children in them, according to Arleen Ringel, a co-coordinator of the food pantry that is open primarily on a walk-in basis.

"We filled quite a few," Mrs. Ringel said Monday. "They have to come to the church and get it. We get calls from all over. It's sad, but you really have to double check the names to watch for double dipping. That spoils it for other people."

The church recently donated \$300 and three large turkeys to the Toledo Rescue Mission in downtown Toledo, which expects to serve hot meals to more than 200 homeless people on Thanksgiving.

Both Shelton Park Baptist Church and the Bedford Lions Den thrift store are getting more calls lately, said Meg Smith, deputy supervisor for Bedford Township. The church holds a monthly food distribution for low-income families. The store also is getting a lot more customers looking for clothes, small appliances and toys, Mrs. Smith said.

Mrs. Ringel has been involved with the St. Paul effort for about 20 years. She said the Head Start Program recently gave her nine families to assist because it had no funds.

"It's not getting better, it's getting worse," she said.

Another church ministry - Helping Hands at Community Lutheran Church in Flat Rock - runs a food distribution every Wednesday that sees anywhere from 25 families to 50 families. Judith Watkins, coordinator, calls the handouts exhausting for the volunteers who fill bags and pass out food, clothes, hats and shoes.

"We had 65 families in one day recently," Mrs. Watkins said. "It wipes you out."

She said the number of recipients has climbed 33 percent this past year. There are 550 families registered on the list, although they don't all come every week.

She recently sent letters to local churches, organizations, schools and corporations asking for funds or food donations.

"We are desperate, but the response has been tremendous," Mrs. Watkins said. "Although the numbers are up, the number of donations are also up, thank goodness. Those that can are already sharing and stepping up to help everybody."

She said two local organizations held drives last week to help restock the food shelves at Helping Hands. The Boy Scouts collected more than 1,200 pieces of canned goods and other food items. Local 300, United Auto Workers, collected \$1,800 at the gate at AutoAlliance International Inc. along with a number of used coats.

"We were panic stricken on how we were going to do it this month," Mrs. Watkins said. "With God's help, it always works somehow."





November 26, 2008

## Coming Sunday: Growing up in Michigan's foster care system

For three years, the Free Press has chronicled the lives of the boys at Detroit's Christ Child House, a modern-day orphanage that is home to some of the most traumatized children in the state's permanent care.

At Christ Child, they find comfort, hope, a loving staff — and a chance at getting adopted.

Come back to [freep.com](http://www.freep.com) on Sunday for our special report.

See video clips at <http://www.freep.com/article/20081126/NEWS05/81126006>



PRESS RELEASE

## **\$20.6 Million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits Will Create Jobs, Help Michigan Residents Find Affordable Housing**

Last update: 5:29 p.m. EST Nov. 25, 2008

LANSING, Mich., Nov 25, 2008 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced that over 2,100 units of affordable rental housing will be built or renovated for low to moderate-income Michigan families, the elderly, people with disabilities and those at risk of homelessness as a result of \$20.6 million in federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) approved by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). The tax credits will also help bolster the state's economy by creating approximately 3,200 jobs in construction and related trades.

"These tax credits will leverage \$200 million in investment necessary to develop thriving and vibrant communities around the state, creating jobs and providing affordable housing," said Granholm. "In this time of economic challenge, we must do all that we can to stimulate the economy and help citizens who are struggling."

MSHDA Executive Director Keith Molin said a portion of the total award would provide units of rental housing for disabled Michigan residents as well as those individuals and families at risk of homelessness.

"About 45 percent of the units created through this allocation are going to be in distressed areas," Molin said.

"This accounts for over \$9.5 million going into areas that are already suffering from severe economic strain and high poverty levels."

Owners and investors in low-income housing may apply to receive a tax credit against their federal tax liability if the rental housing has at least 20 percent of its units for households with incomes at or below 50 percent of the area median, or 40 percent of its units reserved for households with incomes at or below 60 percent of the area median.

The amount of the credit is based on the percentage of certain costs to renovate or develop housing that will be income-and rent-restricted for a minimum of 30 years.

Developers can sell the credit to raise equity for their projects, reducing the necessary mortgage financing for the developer and making rents lower for tenants.

\*Projects funded from the August 2008 Low Income Housing Tax Credit funding round are:

Project County	Project Name	LIHTC Units	Project City	LIHTC Amt Award
Benzie	Patterson Crossing	56	Frankfort	617,355
Berrien	Benton Harbor HOPE VI-Phase IV Harbor Bluffs	52	Benton Harbor	813,798
Chippewa	Edge Of The Woods Apartments	80	Sault Ste Marie	478,453

Chippewa	Park Place City Center	27	Sault Ste Marie	556,591
Clare	Fourth Street Senior Housing	24	Clare	211,371
Emmet	Traverse Woods	128	Petoskey	327,276
Grand	Keystone Village Apartments	24	Garfield Twp	276,491
Houghton	Quincy Haven Apartments	24	Hancock	421,111
Ingham	Abigail, The	44	Lansing	862,531
Ingham	Ballentine Apartments	18	Lansing	93,456
Iosco	Maple Tree Apartments	48	East Tawas	87,662
Jackson	Green Meadows Apartments	24	Springport	104,262
Kent	Bridge Street Place	16	Grand Rapids	276,830
Lapeer	Hidden Hollow Apartments	24	Columbiaville	39,938
Lenawee	Wexford Manor	24	Onsted	91,683
Oakland	Beacon Housing II	44	Pontiac	765,073
Oakland	Phoenix Place Apartments	200	Pontiac	1,000,000
Oakland	Renaissance Court	56	Pontiac	64,693
Oakland	Spring Lake Village	250	Pontiac	1,000,000
Osceola	Springview Manor II	24	Evart	67,985
Wayne	Across The Park Apartments	200	Detroit	746,776
Wayne	Chalmers Square	38	Detroit	715,967
Wayne	Gardenview Estates Phase II A	36	Detroit	775,997
Wayne	Gardenview Estates Phase II B	36	Detroit	775,997
Wayne	Gray Street Affordable Housing Phase II	24	Detroit	592,444
Wayne	Lanier Court Apartments	22	Detroit	387,016
Wayne	L'Vogue Square	40	Detroit	609,808
Wayne	Maxwell Homes	30	Detroit	607,731
Wayne	Medical Center Village - Senior	190	Detroit	1,000,000
Wayne	NDNI Elderly	48	Detroit	803,307
Wayne	Northwest Unity Homes II	45	Detroit	865,889
Wayne	Oakman Place	24	Detroit	460,631
Wayne	Sankofa Village	24	Detroit	492,077
Wayne	St. Aubin Square	48	Detroit	808,972
Wayne	St. John Homes II	45	Detroit	865,889
Wayne	Townsend Homes	30	Detroit	607,731
Wayne	West Oakland Homes	45	Detroit	865,889

Wayne	Highland Manor Apartments	48	Highland Park	541,463
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		2,160		20,680,143

MSHDA's vision in the 21st century is to improve the quality of life for all Michigan residents and create vibrant communities by focusing on providing safe, affordable housing through homeownership and rental programs; ending homelessness; and revitalizing neighborhoods and downtowns. MSHDA's loans and operating expenses are financed through the sale of tax-exempt and taxable bonds and notes to private investors, not from state tax revenues. For information on this and other MSHDA programs, visit the Web site at [www.michigan.gov/mshda](http://www.michigan.gov/mshda).

\*(Media Note) The following link will take you to the MSHDA Web site and a list of corresponding local contacts and telephone numbers for further details regarding the specific projects included in the Tax Credit allocations.

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mshda/mshda\\_li\\_sr\\_2008\\_august1\\_lihtc\\_res\\_255530\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mshda/mshda_li_sr_2008_august1_lihtc_res_255530_7.pdf)

SOURCE Michigan State Housing Development Authority

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### Two facilities celebrate Native American heritage

By Audrey LaFave

*POSTED: November 26, 2008*

BARK RIVER - Students at two local schools collaborated Tuesday in celebration of Native American Heritage Month.

Nah Tah Wahsh Public School Academy students were welcomed at Bark River-Harris School as they put on a program about Native American culture and history. Bark River-Harris elementary students and staff attended the program presented by Native Americans from both the BR-H school as well as Rich Sgarlotti and the Hannahville Indian Community.

The presenters, dressed in Native American regalia, sang songs and did traditional dances for the whole elementary student body at BR-H. Nah Tah Wahsh eighth-grader Shanyce Shawano and Elyse Teeple were some of the main leaders. Shawano said it was fun to take part.

"I've been dancing my whole life," she said.

Students appeared riveted by the dances, but when they were asked to participate in a couples dance, some were hesitant to get up in front of everyone.

"It was kind of hard to get them to open up, especially for the two step," said Shawano. "But it was easy, too, because we had a couple kids here who are Native American and they knew the culture."

Shawano said many of the Native Americans at BR-H school are her relatives, including several cousins.

Native American elementary students were encouraged to wear their regalia to the event, which was coordinated by Indian Education Coordinator Kristy Erickson and art teacher Lynn Mariin.

BR-H students have been working on are with a Native American theme for several weeks and their work was on display at the ceremony. Students learned about traditional Native American culture and the arts as part of Native American Heritage Month.

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